AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of managing availability of workers ~~resources~~ in a team ~~set of resources~~ in support of the allocation of workers ~~resources~~ in said team to ~~set to~~ carry out tasks which together fulfill one or more work requirements, each worker ~~resource~~ in the team ~~the set~~ being provided with a worker interface, ~~resource interface and at least one of said resources being an equipment resource,~~ the method comprising:

storing constraint definition data defining constraints relating to availability of said workers ~~resources~~ for allocation to tasks;

storing an initial data representation of worker ~~resource~~ availability;

receiving at data processing means, from a first worker interface, a first worker availability change proposal ~~one of said resource interfaces, availability data~~ concerning availability of a first worker; ~~resource;~~

operating said data processing mans to:

i) generate ~~generating~~ a proposed data representation of worker ~~resource~~ availability, based on the initial data representation together with said first worker availability change proposal; ~~availability data;~~

ii) determine ~~determining~~ whether said proposed data representation is compatible with said constraint definition data;

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iii) in the case that said proposed data representation is compatible with said

constraint definition data, substitute ~~substituting~~ said proposed data representation for

said initial data representation to generate a new initial data representation; and

in the case that said proposed data representation is not compatible with said

constraint definition data, transmitting a rejection signal to at least <u>a second worker</u>

<u>interface, whereby said second worker interface may respond to receipt of said rejection</u>

<u>signal by outputting a second worker availability change proposal which compensates</u>

<u>for the first worker availability change proposal.</u> ~~one other of said resource interfaces,~~

~~said at least one other resource interface responding to receipt of said rejection signal~~

~~by outputting availability data to said data processing means.~~

Claim 2 (Canceled).

3. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1, wherein, in the case

that a proposed data representation is not compatible with said constraint definition

data, the step of generating and transmitting a rejection signal to <u>at least a second</u>

<u>worker interface</u> ~~said at least one of said resource interfaces~~ comprises generating and

transmitting a rejection signal to a plurality of said <u>worker</u> ~~resource~~ interfaces.

4. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein said <u>second</u>

<u>worker</u> ~~at least one other resource~~ interface is provided with at least one <u>worker</u>

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~~resource~~-profile, the worker ~~resource~~-profile comprising data in respect of a worker, ~~resource,~~ the method further comprising the steps of:

responsive to receiving at a worker ~~resource~~-interface a rejection signal, ~~signal~~ reviewing a worker ~~resource~~-profile provided with respect to that worker ~~resource~~ interface; and

outputting said worker availability change proposal ~~availability data to the data processing means~~-dependent on the outcome of the review.

5. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 4 wherein said worker ~~resource~~-profile comprises at least first and second data types in respect of a worker, ~~resource,~~ the first data type comprising at least one worker ~~resource~~-attribute and the second data type comprising availability commitments of the worker. ~~resource.~~

6. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 4 wherein the worker ~~resource~~-profile further comprises a priority indicator for at least one availability commitment of the worker, ~~resource,~~ and wherein said step of reviewing a worker ~~resource~~-profile comprises reviewing the priority indicator.

7. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 4 wherein said rejection signal comprises an identifier for a selected worker, ~~resource,~~ or for a selected set of workers, ~~resources,~~ and wherein reviewing a worker ~~resource~~-profile and outputting an availability change proposal ~~availability data~~-to the data processing means dependent

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on the outcome of the review comprise reviewing the <u>worker</u> ~~resource~~ profile for the

presence of said identifier and outputting <u>an availability change proposal</u> ~~availability~~

~~data~~ only if said identifier is present.

8. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 1 which further

comprises, subsequent to generating and transmitting said rejection signal, triggering

termination of tasks being carried out in respect of a common work requirement to

which the rejection signal is related.

9. (Currently Amended) A method according to Claim 8 wherein triggering

termination is carried out after a predetermined time has elapsed during which no

<u>availability change proposal</u> ~~availability data~~ has been received from a <u>worker</u> ~~resource~~

interface.

10. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 1 wherein said

constraint definition data comprises at least two sets of constraint definition data, and

the method further comprises:

receiving via a user interface a proposed modification to a first set of constraint

definition data;

reviewing the proposed modification against the second set of constraint

definition data;

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in the case that the proposed modification is compatible with the second set, modifying the first set accordingly; and

in the case that the proposed modification is not compatible with the second set, transmitting a rejection signal to the user interface.

11. (Currently Amended) Apparatus for use in managing availability of <u>workers in a team of workers</u> resources in a set of resources in support of the allocation of <u>workers in said team</u> resources in said set to carry out tasks which together fulfill one or more work requirements, the apparatus comprising:

an input for receiving communication signals from <u>a plurality of worker interfaces;</u> at least one resource interface;

a constraint definition data store for storing data defining constraints relating to availability of said <u>workers</u> resources for allocation to tasks;

a <u>worker</u> resource availability data store for storing an initial data representation of <u>worker</u> resource availability and a proposed data representation of <u>worker</u> resource availability; and

data processing means,

<u>said data processing means</u> the apparatus being arranged, <u>in use to:</u> in use, to

i) maintain an initial data representation in the <u>worker</u> resource availability data <u>store;</u> store,

ii) to receive an input from a <u>first worker</u> resource interface comprising <u>an availability change proposal for said first worker;</u> availability data concerning availability of said resource,

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iii) to generate a proposed data representation of worker ~~resource~~ availability, to

review the proposed data representation of worker ~~resource~~ availability against the

constraints, and either to substitute the proposed data representation of worker

~~resource~~ availability for the initial data representation or to output a rejection message

to at least a second worker ~~one other resource~~ interface, dependent on the outcome of

said review,

said second worker ~~at least one other resource~~ interface, on receipt of said

rejection message, being arranged to transmit to the data processing means a second

worker availability change proposal signal for the second worker which compensates for

said first worker availability change proposal. ~~signal containing availability data for the~~

~~respective resource.~~

12. (Currently Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 11 wherein said

constraint definition data store comprises means for storing at least two sets of

constraint definition data, each set having at least one ~~respective~~ input, said apparatus

having means for reviewing constraint data received at one input against constraint data

received at another input, and means for either outputting a rejection message or for

loading the received constraint data, in dependence on the outcome of the review.

13. (Currently Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 11 wherein each worker

~~resource~~ interface is provided with a profile store for storing at least one worker

~~resource~~ profile and, on receipt of a rejection message, each worker ~~resource~~ interface

is arranged to review any worker ~~resource~~ profiles stored in its profile store and, in the

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event that a worker ~~resource~~-profile is identified as relevant to the rejection message, to transmit to the data processing means an availability change proposal signal from ~~a~~ ~~signal containing availability data for~~ the respective worker interface. ~~resource.~~

14. (Currently Amended) Apparatus according to Claim 13 wherein a worker ~~resource~~-profile comprises at least one data element and a rejection message comprises at least one data element, review of a worker ~~resource~~-profile comprising matching the data element from a rejection message against the data element or elements in a worker ~~resource~~-profile.

15. (Currently Amended) Worker ~~Resource~~-allocation apparatus, for use in the allocation of workers ~~resources~~ to carry out one or more tasks, the apparatus comprising availability management means for managing availability of a team of workers ~~set of resources~~ and worker ~~resource~~-allocation means, wherein the availability management means comprise:

i) a signal input for receiving signals from a worker ~~resource~~-interface, said signals comprising availability data with respect to said worker; ~~resource;~~

ii) a constraint definition data store for storing data defining constraints relating to availability of said workers ~~resources~~ for allocation to tasks;

iii) a worker ~~resource~~-availability data store for storing an initial data representation of worker ~~resource~~-availability for said team ~~said set~~ and a proposed data representation of worker ~~resource~~-availability for said team; ~~said set;~~ and

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iv) data processing means arranged in use to maintain an initial data

representation in the <u>worker</u> ~~resource~~-availability data store, to receive from said <u>signal</u>

<u>input, a first worker availability change proposal from a first worker interface,</u> ~~signal,~~

~~input data concerning availability of a resource,~~ to generate a proposed data

representation of <u>worker</u> ~~resource~~-availability, to review the proposed data

representation of <u>worker</u> ~~resource~~-availability against the constraints, and in

dependence upon the outcome of said review, either to substitute the proposed data

representation of <u>worker</u> ~~resource~~-availability for the initial data representation or to

output, by means of a signal output, a rejection message to at least <u>a second worker</u>

~~one other resource~~-interface and wherein said <u>second worker</u> ~~at least one other~~

~~resource~~-interface is responsive to receipt of said rejection message to generate a

<u>second worker availability change proposal to compensate for said first worker</u>

<u>availability change proposal;</u> ~~signal comprising availability data with respect to a~~

~~respective resource;~~ and

wherein the <u>worker</u> ~~resource~~-allocation means are arranged, in use, to allocate

<u>workers</u> ~~resources~~-of <u>said team</u> ~~said set~~-to one or more respective tasks in dependence

upon a representation of <u>worker</u> ~~resource~~-availability for <u>said team</u> ~~said set~~-maintained

by the <u>worker</u> ~~resource~~-management means.

16. (Currently Amended) <u>Worker</u> ~~Resource~~-allocation apparatus according to

claim 15, wherein the signal input is also for receiving a management signal input from

at least one management interface, one or more of said management signals

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comprising constraint data with respect to at least one <u>worker, resource,</u> and the

apparatus further comprises means for using constraint data received from a

management interface to enter or change data in the constraint definition data store,

and means to categorise data in the constraint definition data store according to source

type, the apparatus being further arranged, on review of the content of the constraint

definition data store, to resolve any conflict in constraint data relevant to a task

acceptance signal according to its source type.

17. (Currently Amended) <u>Worker</u> ~~Resource~~ allocation apparatus according to

claim 16 wherein data in the constraint definition data store is categorised by location in

the store.

18. (Currently Amended) <u>Worker</u> ~~Resource~~ allocation apparatus according to

Claim 16 wherein the apparatus is further arranged to store at least a third category of

data in the constraint definition data store, the source of data in the third category being

requirements of an operational support system for use in performing allocated task(s).

19. (Currently Amended) <u>Worker</u> ~~Resource~~ allocation apparatus according to

claim 15, wherein at least one of said <u>worker</u> ~~resource~~ interfaces is provided with a

<u>worker</u> ~~resource~~ specific data store, and is triggerable by receipt of said rejection

message or said notification signal to review its <u>worker</u> ~~resource~~ specific data store and

to transmit <u>worker</u> ~~resource~~ availability data to the signal input of the <u>worker</u> ~~resource~~

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management means dependent on the outcome of the review, such that allocation of

workers resources can be amended according to interaction between a worker resource

interface, the worker resource-management means and the worker resource-allocation

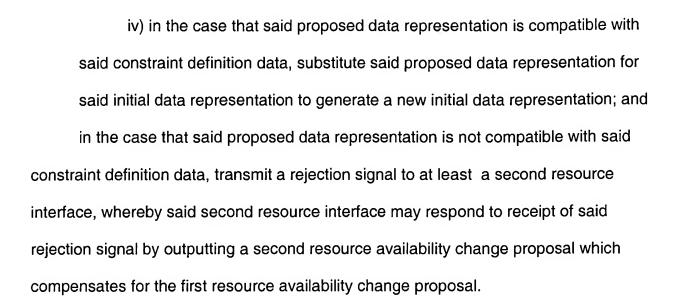means, within limits determined by the constraint definition data.

20. (Currently Amended) A method according to claim 1 wherein said constraint

definition data define constraints relating to the allocation of tasks to respective workers.

resources.

21. (Currently Amended) Apparatus according to claim 11 wherein said

constraint definition data define constraints relating to the allocation of tasks to workers.

respective resources.

22. (Currently Amended) Worker Resource-allocation apparatus, according to

claim 15, wherein one or more signals received at the signal input comprises a task

acceptance signal from a worker resource-interface and wherein the apparatus is

arranged in use to respond to receipt of a task acceptance signal by reviewing the

content of the constraint definition data store and, depending on the result of the review

to output to at least one worker resource-interface a notification signal identifying at

least one task for which worker resource-is required, or to allocate worker resource-to a

task.

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23. (Previously Presented) A method according to Claim 5 wherein the resource profile further comprises a priority indicator for at least one availability commitment of the resource, and wherein said step of reviewing a resource profile comprises reviewing the priority indicator.

24. (New) A method of managing availability of resources in a set of resources in support of the allocation of resources in said set of resources to carry out tasks which together fulfill one or more work requirements, each resource in the set of resources being provided with a resource interface, the method comprising:

storing constraint definition data defining constraints relating to availability of said resources for allocation to tasks;

storing an initial data representation of resource availability;

operating a data processing means to:

i) receive, from a first resource interface, a first resource availability change proposal concerning availability of a first resource;

ii) generate a proposed data representation of resource availability, based on the initial data representation together with said first resource availability change proposal;

iii) determine whether said proposed data representation is compatible with said constraint definition data;

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iv) in the case that said proposed data representation is compatible with said constraint definition data, substitute said proposed data representation for said initial data representation to generate a new initial data representation; and

in the case that said proposed data representation is not compatible with said constraint definition data, transmit a rejection signal to at least a second resource interface, whereby said second resource interface may respond to receipt of said rejection signal by outputting a second resource availability change proposal which compensates for the first resource availability change proposal.

24. (New) Apparatus for use in managing availability of resources in a set of resources in support of the allocation of resources in said set to carry out tasks which together fulfill one or more work requirements, the apparatus comprising:

an input for receiving communication signals from a plurality of resource interfaces;

a constraint definition data store for storing data defining constraints relating to availability of said resources for allocation to tasks;

a resource availability data store for storing an initial data representation of resource availability and a proposed data representation of resource availability; and

data processing means,

the data processing means being arranged, in use, to:

i) maintain an initial data representation in the resource availability data store;

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ii) receive an input from a first resource interface comprising an availability change proposal for said first resource, to generate a proposed data representation of resource availability, to review the proposed data representation of resource availability against the constraints, and

iii) either to substitute the proposed data representation of resource availability for the initial data representation or to output a rejection message to at least a second resource interface, dependent on the outcome of said review; said second resource interface, on receipt of said rejection message, being arranged to transmit to the data processing means a second resource availability change proposal signal for the second resource which compensates for said first resource availability change proposal.

26. (New) A method according to Claim 5 wherein the worker profile further comprises a priority indicator for at least one availability commitment of the worker, and wherein said step of reviewing a worker profile comprises reviewing the priority indicator.